

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4500

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 27532

EXDIS

TOKYO PASS SECRETARY'S PARTY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, LE, FR

SUBJECT: KIDNAPPING IN BEIRUT

REF: STATE 251019

1. IN REPLY TO EMBOFF'S REQUEST FOR FRENCH VIEWS AND ASSISTANCE AS OUTLINED REFTTEL, QUAI DIRECTOR FOR MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA CERLES AGREED OCTOBER 23 TO DRAFT A CABLE REQUESTING THE FRENCH EMBASSY IN BAGHDAD TO APPROACH THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT. CERLES, WHO PRIDES HIMSELF (PROBABLY WITH SOME JUSTICE) ON HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE IRAQI PSYCHE DEVELOPED DURING HIS TOUR AS AMBASSADOR IN BAGHDAD, SAID HE WOULD CAREFULLY FRAME THE LANGUAGE OF THE FRENCH APPROACH AND PROBABLY EMPHASIZE HUMANITARIAN ASPECTS. HE LEFT THE IMPRESSION HE WOULD SEND THE TELEGRAM WITHOUT REFERENCE TO HIGHER AUTHORITY AND THAT SOME LEEWAY MIGHT BE GIVEN TO THE
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FRENCH AMBASSADOR IN MAKING THE DEMARCHE.

2. CERLES SAID THE IRAQIS GENUINELY WANT CALM IN LEBANON IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN TO LIMIT SYRIAN INFLUENCE THERE. HE PREDICTED THAT THE IRAQIS WOULD DENY ANY KNOWLEDGE OF THE KIDNAPPING AND PROTEST THEIR LACK OF INFLUENCE IN THE MATTER. SINCE SYRIAN INFLUENCE IN LEBANON IS GREATER THAN IRAQI, CERLES SUGGESTED THAT THE MEN'S RELEASE MIGHT BEST BE SOUGHT THROUGH PRESSURES ON SYRIA, ESPECIALLY BY SAUDI ARABIA WHICH HOLDS THE PURSE STRINGS.

3. IN REFERRING TO SAUDI INFLUENCE, CERLES NOTED THAT MANY LEBANESE WONDER WHY THE SAUDIS HAVE NOT MORE ACTIVELY SOUGHT TO CALM THE LEBANESE SCENE. AS THE APPARENT SAUDI INTEREST IN A MIDEAST SETTLEMENT AND SAUDI ARABIA'S OWN LONG-TERM SECURITY REQUIRE A PEACEFUL, INDEPENDENT LEBANON, IT IS CURIOUS, THE LEBANESE BELIEVE, THAT THE SAUDIS HAVE BEEN SO PASSIVE. CERLES THOUGHT THAT ONE HYPOTHESIS ADVANCED, NAMELY, THAT THE CONTINUITY OF THE SAUDI BELIEF IN THE NECESSITY TO SPREAD ISLAM HAD LIMITED SAUDI INTERVENTION IN LEBANON, WAS WORTHY OF CONSIDERATION AMONG OTHERS.
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